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## NOMINATING CONVENTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

A NATIONAL nominating convention and all that such a system of delegated authority implies was the outgrowth of state conventions. In many states self-nominations, caucuses and mixed caucuses mark the steps toward a regular representative nominating body. In Pennsylvania, however, while these agencies existed, and at times exerted their influence in the above order, just the reverse was manifest in the first efforts to select a general ticket. Two state conventions composed of duly elected delegates appeared as early as 1788. From that time there was a decline through the mixed caucus to the pure caucus, which by 1800 became a thoroughly organized system for making state nominations. The circumstances which led to the organization of the first nominating convention at Harrisburg, September 3, 1788, grew out of the opposition to the ratification of the Federal Constitution. This opposition found certain local conditions which led it unknowingly toward the development of a representative convention. These conditions were, first, a county-township system of local government, which offered the opposition an opportunity to organize through the township and county into a state protest; second, the pressure of an "over-mountain" or trans-Alleghany population whose bitter hatred of eastern customs and especially of Philadelphia aristocracy had much to do with dividing the state politically; third, the existence of two local political parties whose differences were fed by radical and church prejudices.

The formation of the state constitution of 1776 by the war party in Pennsylvania aroused considerable opposition among the less excitable and peace-loving element. They complained that the constitution was hastily formed and not duly ratified. They felt that it was framed by a body representing only a minority in the state, since many Friends and some Germans who had formerly been active in public affairs had withdrawn from politics. This opposition found little or no expression during the Revolutionary War. It promptly appeared, however, with the peace of 1783. It secured active reinforcement from the late neutrals, from the Friends and Germans, and from the commercial interests of Philadelphia. The party called themselves Republicans and demanded a new state constitution. They objected to the undue patronage which the war constitution placed in the hands of the Supreme Executive Council, and to the

absence of restraints, checks and balances.<sup>1</sup> They were sure that while the constitution of 1776 might be endured during war it could not be tolerated in times of peace. It would jeopardize the commercial interests of the State and tend "to rash, precipitate and oppressive proceedings." The opposition to the Republicans took the name of "Constitutionalists." They had been instrumental in making the constitution of 1776, and they would defend it. Did it not carry us through the long and oppressive war with Great Britain? How then could any one be so unpatriotic as to trample on it now? Surely this opposition must be in league with England and is conniving to overthrow our dearly-bought freedom. The "Constitutionalists" were most largely represented by the trans-Alleghany people, the Scotch-Irish and the more rural population, who were slow to forget their quarrel with England. When the Federal Constitution came before the people for ratification the "Constitutionalists" saw in it an organized plan to rob them of their highly prized liberty. Here was a blow at their individual rights and local privileges. The Federal Constitution was, in spirit, opposed to the state constitution. The Republicans now became the Federalists, and stigmatized the "Constitutionalists" with the term "Anti-federalist." The hurried procedure on the part of the Federalists toward ratification fully convinced the Anti-federalists that the Constitution would not bear deliberate inspection, and, that if they would save the country and its liberties, they must organize their opposition. As soon as six states had ratified and there was a probability that three more would imitate their example, a voice was heard from western Pennsylvania, in April, 1788, suggesting organized opposition. It declared that committees of correspondence are "now engaged in planning a uniform exertion to emancipate this State from the thralldom of despotism. A convention of deputies from every district will, in all probability, be agreed upon as the most eligible mode of combining the strength of the opposition."<sup>2</sup>

Cumberland county was the first to respond to this sentiment. Late in June, as soon as it was learned that ten states had ratified, a county meeting, composed of delegates from the townships, was held. Here a circular letter was prepared and sent to those interested in other counties, urging "that such persons as shall be deemed fit" shall call meetings of delegates from the townships, who in convention assembled shall appoint a number of persons "to represent the county in a general conference of counties of this Com-

<sup>1</sup> McMaster and Stone, *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution*, pp. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> From XVIIIth letter of "Centinel," in *The Independent Gazetteer, or Chronicle of Freedom*, April 9, 1788.

monwealth, to be held at Harrisburg on the third day of September next (1788).” The primary purpose of this call was to organize a concerted effort either to revise the Federal Constitution or to formulate another compact. The secondary purpose was to select delegates who would place in nomination, at the state convention, eight candidates for the new Congress, and also name the electors who should represent the Anti-federal party in choosing a President and a Vice-President.<sup>1</sup> The letter was circulated through committees of correspondence, and other counties promptly responded. In Bucks the township primaries were called by private invitation, circulated only among those interested. The general opinion in the east favored amendments until the Constitution could be legally revised. The western counties, with few exceptions, demanded revision, or a new constitutional convention. The appearance of Clinton’s circular letter from New York, which reached Pennsylvania before all the county meetings had been convened, no doubt exerted considerable influence in determining their attitude upon the matter. This is most noticeable in the resolutions which came up from Fayette county with Albert Gallatin, a delegate. They declared “that in order to prevent dissolution of the Union, and to secure our liberties and those of our posterity, it is necessary that a revision of the Federal Constitution be obtained in the most speedy manner.” The safest method to obtain such revision was announced to be “in conformity to the request of the State of New York.” An effort was made to secure the concerted action of other states, and in order to accomplish this it was exceedingly important that the Anti-federals secure a strong representation in the new Congress. Delegates to the state convention were accordingly selected for this purpose.<sup>2</sup>

The convention met in the village of Harrisburg on the third of September, 1788. Of the nineteen counties in the state thirteen were represented. There were thirty-three delegates in all, including those from the city of Philadelphia. Twenty-one members came from east of the Susquehanna river, and twelve from the western counties. The most important question before the convention was that between revision and amendments. The eastern sentiment prevailed, and efforts to convene a new constitutional convention were suppressed. A series of resolutions was passed suggesting amendments, a strict construction of the Constitution, an increase of the apportioned number of representatives, liberty for state assemblies at any time to recall or appoint their senators, and that direct taxes due to the national government shall be obtained by quotas,

<sup>1</sup> See *Independent Gazatteer, or Chronicle of Freedom*, Sept. 15, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> See McMaster and Stone, *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution*, pp. 552-558.

directly from the several states. As soon as the extreme views were compromised, the more radical element in the convention immediately fastened their hopes on the secondary purpose of the conference, *i. e.*, the nominating of congressmen and electors. Eight Anti-federalists were first named for Congress, but the objection was raised that such a selection would not properly represent the state. At this time the idea that a ticket should represent a party was not entertained. A compromise was effected here also, and two Federalists were nominated. These names, together with those of the ten electors suggested, were carefully protected from undue publicity, and circulated by letters of correspondence among Anti-federalists only. The list was not mentioned in the public prints until November, when the Federalists, in order to advertise their own convention, commenced ridiculing the Harrisburg conference.

As soon as the leading Federalists learned that a meeting had been held at Harrisburg, that an effort had been made to secure a new constitutional convention, that the provisions of the new government had been severely criticised, and that a ticket for Congress and electors had been named, their wrath knew no bounds. By what authority did these men set themselves up to censure the Constitution? What right had they to name a ticket to represent the people of Pennsylvania? Surely these "Constitutionalists" must be bent on treason. If such men are to rule, who then will save us from paper money, tender laws, Indian incursions, mobs, anarchy, poverty, civil war, or even the galling yoke of Great Britain?<sup>1</sup> Another ticket must be prepared for the people. By letters of correspondence, a series of county meetings was called, "to take the sense of the people upon who should receive their franchises for representatives in Congress and for electors." These county meetings differed from those held by the Anti-federalists in having no delegated township representation. They were thoroughly advertised in the newspapers, and with flaming posters on the trees and at the cross-roads. All were welcome. It was the typical Southern mass-meeting. Districts near were largely represented, those more remote were often not represented at all. Everybody was at liberty to nominate. The confusion which resulted led some counties to appoint a nominating committee, which, after withdrawing, would report several names to the general body from which the latter might select. This method was most probably taken from a custom then in vogue in the business meetings of the Society of Friends, in which, for important services, nominating committees were appointed to bring

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 19, 1788.

forward names of suitable persons to serve the meeting. Something of the same method appeared when the Philadelphia town-meeting attempted to impose limiting instructions upon its delegates. A committee was appointed, composed of members from the different wards, which was to bring forward, at a future meeting, the names of six suitable persons from whom their delegates at Lancaster might make a selection. Any of the six were considered proper persons to represent the city in the new national Congress. Six names were also selected in the same manner, and recommended to the delegates as suitable persons to be chosen electors.<sup>1</sup> The town meetings were convened before these reports on limited instructions were approved by popular acclamation. This method does not appear at the time in any of the county proceedings. Their instructions were more general. Ability, character and zeal for Pennsylvania's interests were the chief qualities demanded in the resolutions drawn up at these conventions. It was generally urged that the candidates for the positions should be men of ample means.<sup>2</sup>

The Federal convention at Lancaster was convened for no other purpose than to name a ticket. Thirty members were present, representing five more counties than at Harrisburg. The nominees were all Federalists. In selecting the eight congressmen-at-large an effort was made to represent the state geographically. The chief interest of the campaign was centered upon the congressional nominations. The Federalists sought to draw down ridicule upon the Harrisburg convention and its methods. The action of neither convention was considered binding. The Anti-federal ticket, since it contained two Federalists, promised to become more popular. This encouraged the party leaders, who, through the public prints, removed two more of their own men and substituted in their stead two Federalists, thus dividing the congressional ticket equally between the two parties. The Federalists, seeing defeat for them in this movement, immediately proceeded to remove two of their own number nominated at Lancaster, and put in their place the two Federalists selected at Harrisburg. This politic move won for them the victory, and eight Federalists, representing a fusion of the Lancaster and Harrisburg nominations, were elected. These two conventions of 1788 were secured by adopting methods then prevalent in the two leading religious organizations in the state. The Presbyterian method of selecting delegates to a general synod no doubt suggested the means of calling the Harrisburg conference. The

<sup>1</sup> From *The Pennsylvania Packet, or Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 20, 1788.

<sup>2</sup> From *The Pennsylvania Packet, or Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 17 and 21, 1788.

Friends' custom of sending out nominating committees was employed in choosing the members of the Lancaster convention.

The period from 1788 to 1804 marks a most singular rise and fall of nominating methods. It was during this period that state conventions were outgrown and smothered by the caucus system; at the same time the county convention was brought to a remarkable degree of proficiency. The growth of the one and decline of the other, side by side, during the same years, participated in by the same men, is an interesting phenomenon in the development of democratic institutions. The intense excitement which made the conventions of 1788 possible soon disappeared. The new state constitution of 1790 reorganized the political factions in the commonwealth. The Constitutionals were no more. The distinction between Federalists and Anti-federalists was not tightly drawn upon state issues. The nominating methods of 1788 were not considered binding upon either party. The difficulties in holding a state conference were numerous and serious. There were few, if any, good roads in the commonwealth. Crossing the mountains was a serious and dangerous undertaking. Indeed, it was no uncommon thing for men to make their wills before starting to a state convention. These considerations led, in 1790, a group of prominent Federalists, members of the state constitutional convention and the assembly, to suggest that a meeting of those interested be called before the two bodies should adjourn. At this meeting General Arthur St. Clair was nominated for governor and a circular letter was issued announcing that this selection was made by men representing every part of the state.<sup>1</sup>

These proceedings aroused the active resentment of the Anti-federalists and the anti-aristocratic feeling of many in the convention and the assembly. What right had a few self-appointed men around Philadelphia to dictate to the freemen of the state and name their governor? St. Clair was not nominated by a representative body. These men did not compose an eighth part of the convention and the assembly. The greatest crime of all, however, in the eyes of the opposition, was that they could not agree in the caucus.<sup>2</sup> Another meeting was immediately called. It was composed of Anti-federalists judiciously selected from the two bodies. They nominated General Mifflin, the late president of the supreme executive council. Here was a meeting, they declared, which *did* represent the various parts of the state, and since their decision was unanimous Mifflin was the only legitimate candidate. An interesting

<sup>1</sup> From *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 15, 1790.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

campaign now sprang up, in the effort to secure the ratification of one or the other of these nominations before the county meetings. The result was most commonly decided by the faction which could secure the largest attendance. The contests in these meetings all turned upon considerations of the legality or illegality of these caucus-like nominations. It is interesting to note that during the entire campaign no mention was ever made of a caucus. These gubernatorial nominations of 1790 planted the seeds of the caucus method. The conventions of 1788 planted the germs of delegated authority.

By 1792 the Federalists were largely in the majority ; upon the proper method of nominating they could not agree. The "Conference men" declared that the methods of 1788 represented the only constitutional means of selecting candidates. The "Correspondence men," deeply imbued with a sense of the efficacy of the methods used in 1790, maintained that a convention was unnecessary. They would send out circular letters to the prominent men in various parts of the state, asking for the "sense of the people" upon the proper character to nominate. From the lists returned a ticket could be formulated which would more truly represent the will of the people than any convention possibly could. This split in the Federal party resulted in the complete absorption of the Anti-federalists. They joined the faction which most nearly agreed with their local prejudices. This remarkable division upon methods of nominating sprang up in Philadelphia, where the Federal majority was the largest. From July until September, 1792, it was fought out in the ward and town meetings. Turbulence, disorder and even riot prevailed. If one faction secured the chairmanship it became the delight of the other party to break up the meeting. "The Conference men" reported in favor of a state convention at Lancaster composed of delegates selected at the various county meetings. The "Correspondence men" reported in favor of letters of correspondence and of submitting the lists secured in this way to the county meetings, by which a ticket could be selected. This carried the war into the county meetings. These, with one exception, were the typical Southern mass-meetings. Hither came conference and correspondence men. The Federalists and Anti-federalists forgot all national distinctions as they divided upon this issue. Here came the men newly enfranchised under the constitution of 1790, men intoxicated with a recently acquired prerogative. In these county meetings was a seething mass of diverse sentiment ; here was democracy in the nascent state, in that vigorous and buoyant period of youth when growth was rapid. These recently enfranchised men declared that the right to nominate was as much theirs as the right



to vote. Although they largely represented the turbulent, lawless and even riot-tinged element, they maintained with tender jealousy an unflinching protest against slated tickets and caucus methods. They made nominating conventions possible. Both reports were debated and fought over in these meetings. Each faction was there with a series of resolutions to be approved. Whichever party could secure the greatest amount of Anti-federal aid captured the convention. Occasionally two county meetings were held, as in Montgomery county. This resulted from the fact that the "Conference men" succeeded in holding a meeting composed of committees from the townships. The "Correspondence men" declared that no committee could represent a township, that mass-meetings were the only final tribunal to pass upon these reports.

The result of these county meetings was a state convention at Lancaster, held by the "Conference men." This was the last convention of its kind in the state for twenty years. The Anti-federalists, who initiated representative conventions in 1788, furnished the means of their death in 1792. Although the state had just been divided into congressional districts, the candidates were still named at large. Thirteen men were nominated for Congress and fifteen for electors. The convention was largely Federal. The correspondence faction, through a state committee, sent out five hundred and twenty letters. Replies were received from seventeen out of twenty counties. Forty-three names of Federalists and Anti-federalists composed the list. These names were submitted to a second series of county meetings, where a selection was made and reported to the state committee. By this means a ticket was finally brought into proper dimensions.

One of the important causes producing the decline of conventions and assisting in the growth of the caucus was the fact that a ticket when made in a convention did not stand. It was customary for election districts, usually composed of several townships, to hold local campaign meetings and shuffle the tickets, *i. e.*, select from each list such names as they desired and recommend them by a series of resolutions. The forty-three names published by the state committee of correspondence, and the ticket of thirteen nominated at Lancaster were now taken up and shuffled into as many combinations as there were meetings and committees for that purpose. For over two weeks scarcely a day passed without a new congressional ticket appearing in the public prints. It was not Federalism or Anti-federalism so much as conference or correspondence methods of nominating which marked the congressional issue. The two tickets finally appeared with six names, the same on each; these

were considered representative men above party bias. Then followed their respective conference or correspondence leaders.

The campaign of 1792 weakened the cause of popular conventions. The Lancaster conference represented the convention ("conference") idea as it then existed in each of the two parties. Henceforth the majority party clings to caucus methods, while the minority struggles for popular conventions. Indeed the growth of modern nominating machinery, from the primary to the national convention, arose from its recognized efficacy in concentrating the strength of the minority. And in the fertile brain of the minority were its devices originated. Caucus methods in Pennsylvania originated in the gubernatorial nominations. The constitution of 1790 placed a large amount of patronage in the hands of the governor. He practically appointed all the county officers, including the numerous magistrates. It was an easy matter for the incumbent, if caucus methods might be employed, to have himself renominated by the retiring members of the assembly for as many terms as the constitution would permit.

In 1793, under cover of an unusual excitement over French foreign affairs and the depression caused by the yellow fever in Philadelphia, Mifflin was renominated by a pure legislative caucus, the first in the state. Indeed a large number of the peace-loving citizens looked upon this as a more respectable method than the mob meetings of 1792. It was not considered so great a crime for a caucus to renominate a governor as to name the congressman. By 1796 the congressmen were nominated by counties and districts, thus turning the people's attention from state to county conventions.

The Anti-federal assemblymen, remembering the quiet caucus which nominated Mifflin, determined to compromise popular sentiment and hold a mixed caucus to select electors. Several prominent citizens were invited from various parts of the state and also the Pennsylvania members in the United States Congress. These, with a select body of Anti-federal assemblymen, proceeded to make an electoral ticket. The Federalists nominated their electors in the same manner, except that no mention is made of United States Congressmen having been invited to the caucus.

The people took but little interest in the nominations of 1796. Their right of being represented in the nominating body was resigned without much protest. These mixed caucuses of 1796 became the stepping-stone from the delegated conventions of 1788 and 1792 down to a pure caucus in 1800. By this time the Republicans (Democrats) had a majority in the assembly, the Federalists in the state senate. The Republicans for four years had been petitioning

the legislature to pass an enactment districting the electors. Their failure in this aroused general indignation. What right, they asked, has the legislature to refuse to make provision for the popular selection of electors? Such indifference was unconstitutional. These privileges ought to flow from the choice of the people. These were Federal attempts to usurp the liberties of the people and must be suppressed. This protest from the minority party led to a compromise. The assembly (Republican) selected eight and the senate (Federal) seven of the fifteen electors. By this means Pinckney, the Federal candidate for President in 1800, secured seven votes from Pennsylvania. This was the last protest against the caucus. In 1804, when the Republicans were in the majority, they forgot their appeals of 1800 and assumed the pure caucus privileges without any qualms of conscience.

Since the conventions of 1788 three presidential campaigns had intervened. The methods of nomination had been: Conference or correspondence in 1792, mixed caucus in 1796, joint vote of the legislature in 1800, and a pure caucus in 1804. For several years popular interest had been centered upon county conventions. Anti-caucus sentiment found its life among the people. By the time when the pure caucus appeared in state matters thoroughly organized county conventions with delegated representation from the townships and thoroughly equipped county committees were common.

The first county meetings were of the Southern mass-meeting type, the largest attendance, of course, coming from the districts nearest the county seat. Township representation was secured by appointing a committee composed of citizens present representing the various townships. This custom probably originated in the town meetings of Philadelphia, where a "ward's committee" was appointed from the wards represented and was sent out as a nominating committee. The township primary meeting appeared in embryo in 1788, when the Anti-federalists urged each township to convene such persons as were "deemed fit" and select from the number suitable persons to represent them in a county meeting. The primary meeting grew in counties where the two dominant parties were nearly evenly divided.

The Montgomery county Federalists, in 1792, being slightly in the minority, held township meetings and appointed committees to attend the county meeting which sent delegates to Lancaster. The Anti-federalists, or the correspondence faction, held their county meeting and advertised that no township committees were expected to attend. Two years later (1794) seventeen townships and one borough were represented at the county meeting. The credentials

of the delegates were verified and none but those who had been duly elected at a township meeting were admitted.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the Republicans obtained the majority in Montgomery county the further development of the county meeting ceased and was taken up in Chester county, where the Federalists were slightly in the majority. In 1794 three nominating county meetings were held; a mass meeting was held at Marshalton to nominate county officers, an inter-county mass meeting at Dilworthtown, composed of the "electors" of Chester and Delaware counties, to nominate a congressman to represent the two counties. The third meeting was held at West Chester, September 16th, for the purpose of selecting conferees who should meet those from Bucks and Montgomery counties and nominate four candidates for state senate. Although Chester county was still strongly Federal, it was thought that the Republicans might carry the three counties for the state senate if the nominations were carefully made by representative bodies. This was considered especially necessary in Chester county. Township meetings were accordingly held and committees of two were sent to the county meeting. Each township was permitted to have but one vote in the convention. No serious objections were offered to the delegated powers exercised in this meeting, since it was called for a special purpose.

By 1800 delegated representation became an established feature; at the same time the people looked upon the county mass-meeting as the only final tribunal. Nominations must be referred to these mass-meetings for approval. It was at one time proposed in Chester county to refer the nominations made in a convention of delegates, to the people assembled in mass-meeting in each election district. Since these districts were often large, objections were offered to this referendum. A compromise was accordingly effected and the citizens' county mass-meeting and the convention of delegates were convened the same day. All assembled in mass-meeting and effected an organization. Then it was resolved "unanimously that this meeting" (the citizens) "withdraw for a space of time, so as to afford sufficient room and every other opportunity to the committee" (delegates) "to accelerate the important duties for which they have been chosen and convened."<sup>2</sup> These delegates effected another organization and made nominations for all the offices at their disposal, except such as were selected by conferees. The ticket thus framed was presented later in the day to the people's convention for approval or disapproval. This referendum was in vogue in Chester

<sup>1</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 10, 1794.

<sup>2</sup> From *Aurora*, Aug. 31, 1802.

county until after 1803. Its suppression caused a temporary division in the Republican party. A similar method was continued in Philadelphia, where the nominations made at the meeting of the wards' committee were referred to a general town-meeting for approval. Some modification of the same feature appeared from time to time in a few of the other counties. In the growth of local democracy this referendum reveals a stubborn reluctance on the part of freemen to resign a popular privilege into the hands of a few. They believed that such matters should find their ultimatum in the will of the people. The county committee was an outgrowth of the committee of correspondence. The people objected seriously to self-formed committees. What right had a few men to form themselves into a committee and call a convention? It soon became customary to elect a committee at the county meeting to serve for one year. Chester county at one time had four committees: (1) a corresponding committee, composed of two men in each township; it was their duty to call and conduct the township primaries; (2) a "major committee," composed of six citizens in each township, whose duty it was to furnish tickets and to conduct the elections; (3) the representative committee, composed of the delegates, whose duty it was to form a ticket; (4) a permanent committee, composed of five prominent citizens at large; it was their duty to keep the records, look after the printing, and enter into correspondence with other counties and the general committee at Philadelphia. It was from a union of the features found in the permanent committee and the correspondence committee that the modern county committee was formed. The selection of conferees to confer with those of other counties, in order to nominate a congressman or a state senator, was one of the most potent factors in forcing the people to delegate their authority into the hands of others.

Almost from the beginning of the conferee system it was customary for the convention to pass resolutions instructing their conferees. Difficulties soon arose because candidates would not abide by the decision of the conferees' committee. The defeated candidate would, in many instances, conduct a campaign on his own account. This led, as early as 1801, to a concerted effort compelling candidates to pledge themselves to abide by the decision of the conferees. The pledging was done in the presence of the convention where the conferees were selected. The instructing of delegates and the pledging of candidates were features brought into prominence by the system of conferees. Self-nominations for county offices were common until about 1800. Frequently as many as six or eight candidates

<sup>1</sup> From *Aurora*, Oct. 4, 1803.

had their cards before the public for the same office. If one of them secured the endorsement of his party in county mass-meeting it did not deter the others from continuing as candidates. The office of sheriff in the city of Philadelphia was exceedingly profitable. The Republicans in 1800 perceived that unless some method was adopted to diminish the number of candidates a Federalist would secure the office. Previous to this time party politics had not seriously affected county positions. The Republicans, having the majority, were determined that no Federalist should hold a position of profit. A special meeting was accordingly called in November, 1799, to devise some method to reduce the number of candidates for the shrievalty. At this meeting a committee was appointed to consider the matter. This committee met with all the candidates and proposed that each man choose from among his firm friends seven persons who should represent him in a future meeting. Four candidates pledged themselves to abide by the decision of this committee of twenty-eight. A candidate was finally selected after considerable wrangling and ill-feeling. The applicants for the commissionership were instructed to select three men to compose the committee to choose one of their number for that office. So many complications arose from this method that in 1801 the ward's committee suggested sending the candidates out to select from among themselves some one whom they all could support; if they could not agree they were pledged to leave the selection to the ward's committee. Of course, they could not agree and this threw the selection of county officers into the hands of the ward's committee. As a consequence the struggle for these positions was shifted from the general election into the county meetings and finally into the primary meetings.

The perfecting of the county convention and the division in the Republican party gave birth to a new anti-caucus sentiment by 1805. The patronage placed in the hands of the governor by the constitution of 1790 led the dissatisfied to believe that a change in the executive would cure their troubles. Consequently, when McKean was nominated in 1805 for the third time by a pure caucus, the opposition, composed of Federal Republicans, or Quids, and some Federalists, nominated Simon Snyder by using the correspondence methods of 1792.

The county convention was considered by the people the final tribunal upon a state nomination. Each faction now placed the name of its nominee and its method of naming him before these county meetings, and a caucus and anti-caucus campaign was fought over in a similar manner to that of the correspondence or conference struggle in 1792. This led to a discussion in 1807 of the evils of

caucus methods. Counties whose representatives on the conferees' committee had been slighted or ignored took up the subject with vigor. The Federal Republicans and several Federalists united in the movement. Resolutions were passed in county meetings urging that the nominations for 1808 be made in a state convention, composed of as many men as constituted the assembly, and that under no circumstances should this convention be composed of men who held an office of profit under the governor. Indeed it was demanded that they should pledge themselves not to hold such position for three years after the convention.

When the campaign of 1808 opened the leaders thought it best to crush all such anti-caucus sentiment, or, failing in this, to compromise with it. It was unconstitutional for McKean longer to retain his office, three terms having now expired. Snyder could easily be nominated by a Democratic-Republican caucus if the party quarrels could be healed, and since the Federalists were going to nominate a ticket immediate union with the dissatisfied element was necessary. This was affected by a compromise. The Democratic-Republican state committee met with the legislative caucus. Minority counties, with no representation in the assembly, were permitted to send delegates to this caucus or quasi-convention. This body nominated Simon Snyder for governor, April 30, 1808. They also collected the presidential electors and instructed them to support Madison for President. This compromise silenced the anti-caucus element in the party.

The presidential nominations of 1804 were the only pure caucus nominations which were unopposed. By 1808 the Federalists were talking against caucus nominations of presidential electors. This fact made it very much easier for the Democrat-Republicans to gather these anti-caucus prodigals home under the parental roof. Indeed this fact split the Federal party temporarily. The Constitutional Federalists (those favoring a new state constitution) held a pure caucus at Lancaster and nominated John Spayd for Governor. The stalwart Federalists spent all their energies in criticising Spayd and all caucus nominations.<sup>1</sup>

This shifting of the anti-caucus sentiment into the ranks of the Federalists led the Republicans to exert every effort to heal their old party division. Duane was now leading the anti-caucus faction in the party and advocating a state convention in 1811. This sentiment must be crushed if Snyder was to be renominated. Accordingly the war party brought out their political whip and succeeded in silencing all public agitation of the subject. Simon

<sup>1</sup> See Poulson's *Advertiser*, July 7, 1808.

Snyder was nominated by a pure legislative caucus in 1811. The anti-caucus men among the Federalists saved their ammunition for the presidential campaign. They struggled to make this the issue with the entire party and succeeded by posing as the peace party and thus securing several anti-war Republicans. The war party nominated their electors at a pure caucus. The peace party called a state convention to meet at Lancaster on September 24th. This movement started in the York county convention, where resolutions were passed favoring a state convention to select electors, who were instructed to vote for De Witt Clinton for President, and Jared Ingersoll for Vice-President. The Lancaster county convention endorsed the action of York county, and, after passing resolutions condemning caucus methods, named their preference for elector to represent Lancaster city.

The peace party in the different counties now followed this example, selecting delegates and instructing for electors. This produced the first state convention since 1792. It was held at Lancaster, September 24, 1812. Many of the county meetings which sent delegates were the old-fashioned mass-meetings without township representation. This was due to the fact that the Federalists adopted the methods of the Republicans with reluctance.

From this date, the anti-caucus sentiment was united on both gubernatorial and presidential issues. It appeared in 1816, uniting the anti-Monroe and anti-Snyder factions. A state convention, similar to that of 1812, was held. Counties which were unable to send delegates were urged to send their instructions in writing. The convention, therefore, involved a combination of the conference and correspondence ideas of 1792. Since it was impossible to agree upon instructions for the electors, it was simply resolved that Monroe was not the unanimous choice of the state. The Monroe Democrats supported the electoral ticket made by a pure legislative caucus.

The presidential campaign was overshadowed by the approaching gubernatorial contest of 1817. Snyder's three terms had expired. The anti-caucus faction was now known as the "Old School Democrats," while the caucus men were called "Patent Democrats." The remnant of the Federalists was divided. As soon as it was ascertained that the "Patent Democrats" were arranging to nominate Wm. Findley in caucus, the opposition flew into the wildest excitement. A caucus was bad enough, but a caucus "cut and dried" was intolerable. A state convention must be held on the same date as the caucus, March 4th, at a place far from the "intrigues of



the Executive and his servants, the Assemblymen." Carlisle was chosen as the best location. County meetings were held all over the state during January and February. Mifflin county instructed for a character of honesty, integrity and sound Republican principles. The members of the Berks county convention pledged themselves to oppose any candidate nominated by a Harrisburg caucus. They also sent instructions to their representatives in the legislature, not to attend the caucus on penalty of being considered "unworthy of the confidence of the people of the county." Three counties were represented at Carlisle by written instructions only. Six names were placed in nomination, though it was generally understood that five of them would withdraw. Joseph Heister was nominated unanimously. The convention declared itself in favor of rotation in office as essential to the safety of a free people.

The "Patent Democrats" sought to compromise with the anti-caucus element by holding a mixed caucus. It was composed of assemblymen, office-holders and the warm friends of the two candidates, Findley and Boileau. But the day had gone by when any such compromise could silence the anti-caucus agitation. The personal bitterness of the campaign only gathered fuel for the combined state and national contest of 1820.

The Old School Democrats now assumed the name of Independent Republicans. The anti-caucus protest and rotation in office were the chief planks in their platform. These were the twin giants who were to cleanse the Augean stables of political corruption. The chief instructions at the county meetings were to elect anti-Findley men. March fourth was found to be an unpropitious season of the year to secure a large delegation. Twenty-nine men met at Carlisle and placed twelve names in nomination *viva voce*. It was the general opinion that the more names they could propose from which to make a selection, the more Democratic would be the proceedings. Joseph Heister received all the votes but one.<sup>1</sup> The electoral ticket was made but not announced. The Findley party held a mixed caucus, but convened it at Lewistown in order to secure more popular approval and a large attendance. This was a compromise with the popular antipathy to any nominations emanating from Harrisburg.

Three years later the state executive was again open. Joseph Heister, being true to the principles of his party, retired. The original Democratic Republicans, recently known as Patent Democrats, the caucus faction, now realized that if they were to secure the governorship they must compromise with the anti-caucus faction,

<sup>1</sup> *Aurora*, March 8, 1820.

the Independent Republicans, in a more decided manner than they had ever done. Indeed, if they could but retain the shadow of a caucus it would be an entering wedge when this inane excitement should die away. They accordingly fell in with the anti-caucus men in holding county meetings and selecting delegates for a rousing state convention to be held at Harrisburg, March 4, 1823. In this convention, minority counties not represented by regularly chosen delegates were allowed to be represented by the required number of their representatives in the assembly or the senate.

Of course the caucus element was largely in the minority in this convention. Both factions were represented. Here was a convention with a contest. They balloted all day without making a choice. That evening a combination was made, and the next morning John Andrew Shulze was nominated by a vote of 95 to 36.<sup>1</sup> The Federalists in the convention, together with the Independent Republicans, immediately saw in this nomination the hidden workings of a caucus. The caucus ferment in the convention spoiled the entire mass. This was nothing but a machine to make governors, a trick to fool the people. They would submit to nothing of the kind. A pure nominating convention must be held. This was accomplished at Lewistown, May 15th.

After this date all conventions for state purposes were free from caucus intrusion. In 1824 the Independent Republicans, now called Andrew Jackson Democrats, held a pure nominating convention composed of one hundred and twenty-four delegates. At this meeting it was decided that no elector had a right to bolt their instructions. The caucus party called a pure nominating convention also, and instructed their electors for Wm. H. Crawford. The dying gasp of caucus methods appeared in one of their resolutions, which declared that they favored congressional caucuses as a means of nominating presidential candidates. This was done for the purpose of gathering votes from both parties.

The campaign of 1824 removed the last vestige of caucus methods. The state was now ready to join her sister states in securing a national convention for presidential nominations.

JOS. S. WALTON.

<sup>1</sup> From *United States Gazette and True American*, March 7, 1823.